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SUBJECT: MCNS DISCUSSES ATTACK ON BURATHA MOSQUE AND
SECURITY IN BAGHDAD

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (A), (B), (D)
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11. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: The Iraqi Ministerial Committee for National Security (MCNS) convened at the residence of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari the evening of April 8 to discuss the previous day's suicide bombing attack on the Buratha mosque and the overall security situation in Baghdad.

That there has been no major retaliatory violence following the mosque bombing is attributable to quick and effective actions by both political/religious leaders and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). However, it was agreed that the period of maximum danger is not yet over, given that it took 48 hours for violence to really begin after Samarra's al-Askariya mosque was attacked on February 22. MNF-I Deputy Commanding General (DCG) recommended that PM Ja'afari consider activating the emergency response plan that had been agreed upon following the Samarra attack. Both the Ministers of Interior and Defense said they believe the attack on the Buratha mosque is not as provocative as the attack in Samarra. With regard to security for Baghdad, the PM requested a report on Operation Scales of Justice. Concern was expressed that it is time to review the security plan for Baghdad in order to adjust for changing enemy tactics. END SUMMARY.

12. (S//REL GBR AUS) Members of the MCNS present were PM Ja'afari, Minister of Interior Bayan Jabr, Minister of Defense Sadoun al-Dulime, Minister of State for National Security Affairs Karim al-Anzi, National Security Advisor Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Ambassador, British Ambassador Patey, MNF-I DCG Fry, and the PM's military advisor.

ATTACK ON BURATHA MOSQUE

13. (S//REL GBR AUS) At an April 8 meeting of the MCNS, Jabr and Dulime confirmed reports that the attack on the Shia Buratha mosque the previous afternoon had been carried out by three suicide vest bombers, apparently including at least two women (all were dressed as women). The first bomber detonated at the security checkpoint just outside the mosque, and in the bedlam that followed, the other two bombers ran into the interior areas and detonated. This attack came the day after another suicide attack near the most holy Shia mosque in Iraq, the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf. DCG Fry reported that there had not yet been a major wave of retaliatory attacks and that this is attributable to immediate and effective actions by both political/religious leaders and the ISF. The prompt calls for restraint by community leaders, coupled with the already elevated numbers of ISF on the streets due to Operation Scales of Justice,

inhibited any who had the desire to violently react, Fry added. Nonetheless, Fry warned, the period of maximum danger has not yet passed. Following the February 22 Samarra attack, he explained, the major acts of retaliatory violence did not begin for 48 hours. It is therefore critical that political leaders continue to tell the people that they must recognize this attack for what it was -- an attempt to ignite sectarian violence -- and that they not fall into the trap the terrorists have set for them. In addition, he noted, security forces must remain alert. Both Jabr and Dulime predicted that any reaction in response to the attack will not be as severe as what followed the attack in Samarra. Nevertheless, they acknowledged the need to remain alert and prepared.

14. (S//REL GBR AUS) DCG Fry reported that MNF-I is receiving indications that preparations are underway in some quarters to launch revenge attacks and that MNF-I is prepared to deal with these threats. When pressed by Rubaie to be more specific, DCG responded that there are reports that Jaysh al-Mahdi and other elements are ordering the movement of weapons and people above and beyond what is normally observed. The DCG noted that following the Samarra attack, the PM had ordered the preparation of a plan and procedures to be followed in a similar emergency. DCG suggested that the PM consider initiating those procedures in this case. Rubaie responded that the plan is not yet complete but that he could have it ready by the following day. The MCNS agreed to reconvene at 9 a.m. on April 9 to discuss these procedures. The MCNS also agreed that the ministers and other political figures would continue to make public calls urging calm.

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UPDATE ON OPERATION SCALES OF JUSTICE

15. (S//REL GBR AUS) The PM requested an update on Operation Scales of Justice. DCG reported that MNF-I considers the operation to be a considerable success. It has two aims, military and political, and has succeeded at both, DCG said. The number of patrols by Iraqi Police and Army units in Baghdad has reached an unprecedented level, and, on the military front, this has led to a declining number of security incidents - although, as the two recent mosque attacks demonstrate, it is impossible to halt all terrorist activities. On the political side, DCG noted, the increased number and visibility of patrols has bolstered the reputation of both the ISF and the government. In addition, the operation has fostered an environment in which MNF-I and ISF are obtaining more intelligence concerning the activities of terrorist networks. This increase has led to targeted raids that have netted both weapons and suspects, DCG remarked. DCG stated that MNF-I is prepared to continue to support this increased operational tempo and recommends that the Iraqi government do so as well.

16. (S//REL GBR AUS) Dulime, clearly feeling the effect of media criticism, expressed some frustration, exclaiming that, although the plan is good on paper, he is unsure if it is being executed properly. Dulime said that there could be two problems with any military plan: either it is not a good plan or it is not being applied properly. DCG responded that Dulime is being too hard on himself and added that there is a third variable to any military plan: the actions of the enemy. DCG reminded the ministers that the enemy we are fighting is constantly changing tactics and that any plan must be calibrated to account for this. It appears, DCG commented, that recently the enemy is concentrating its resources on conducting attacks within Baghdad that are designed to foment sectarian violence and divisions. DCG said that MNF-I is aware of these shifts by the enemy and is always evaluating how to deal with them. He and Ambassador suggested that a comprehensive briefing be prepared for the

PM setting out the overall campaign plan as well as the more directed plans for the Baghdad area.
KHALILZAD